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PROFANITY!

PROFANITY is a sign of a scant vocabulary.

Prof. Lounsbury, of Yale, writes an article for Harper's Magazine on the intellectual as distinguished from the moral aspect of profane language. He says that swearing arises from a strong mental impulse which a man desires to express and has no other adequate language to give vent to his feelings.

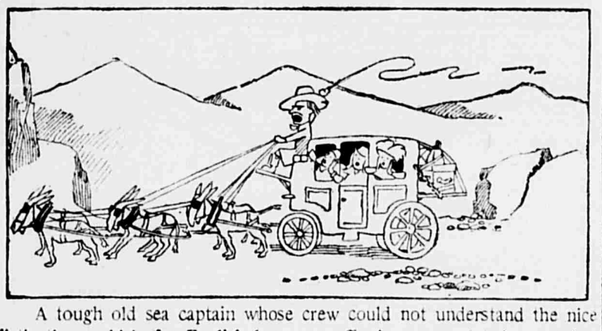
Hitherto swearing has been considered from the moral side. It is forbidden by the Ten Commandments. Until 1882 it was made a crime by the penal code. In public it is still punishable as provocative of disorderly conduct.

None of the mandates against swearing has had such effect of diminishing its volume as the growing belief that profanity ranks with a soiled collar, an unshaven face, or uncouth apparel as a proof of lack of breeding, cultivation or orderly habits.

As a man's reasoning powers develop and as he enlarges the scope and exactness of his vocabulary he naturally ceases to be profane. Profanity is an inexact, turbid way of expressing feelings. The same expletives are used indiscriminately for wrath, indignation, protest, resentment and remonstrance.

The uneducated man who is in pain swears. If he is drunk he swears. If he stumbles on the street he swears. If he is dissatisfied with his job he swears. Whatever emotion or thought he has beyond a range of a limited vocabulary he resorts to his stock of oaths.

Profanity may be made artistic, but that is something which certainly ordinary swearing is not. The Western mule driver in the old teaming days acquired by long experience a variety and gradation of oaths ranging in successive octaves of profanity like a keyboard of a piano.



A tough old sea captain whose crew could not understand the nice distinctions which the English language affords, accumulated a vocabulary of profanity in excess of the number of usual English words which his crew understood.

The total number of words which many people use in their ordinary life and conversation does not exceed 500. A man talking at the rate of 100 words a minute, which is slower than the average speech, utters several thousand words a day to his family at his home, to his associates at his work and to casual acquaintances.

A list of a hundred will include four-fifths of these words. Any one can test this by keeping count of the number of times in ordinary conversation a, an, the, is, are, was, were, to, this, that, and, but, or and the like occur. Add to this the stock of every day nouns and verbs descriptive of food, motion and work and the result will be a list of 300.

The use of "cuss" words, like the excessive use of adjectives, weakens the force of speech. The iteration of a statement invites its questioning. The piling on of superlatives dims the underlying statement of fact.

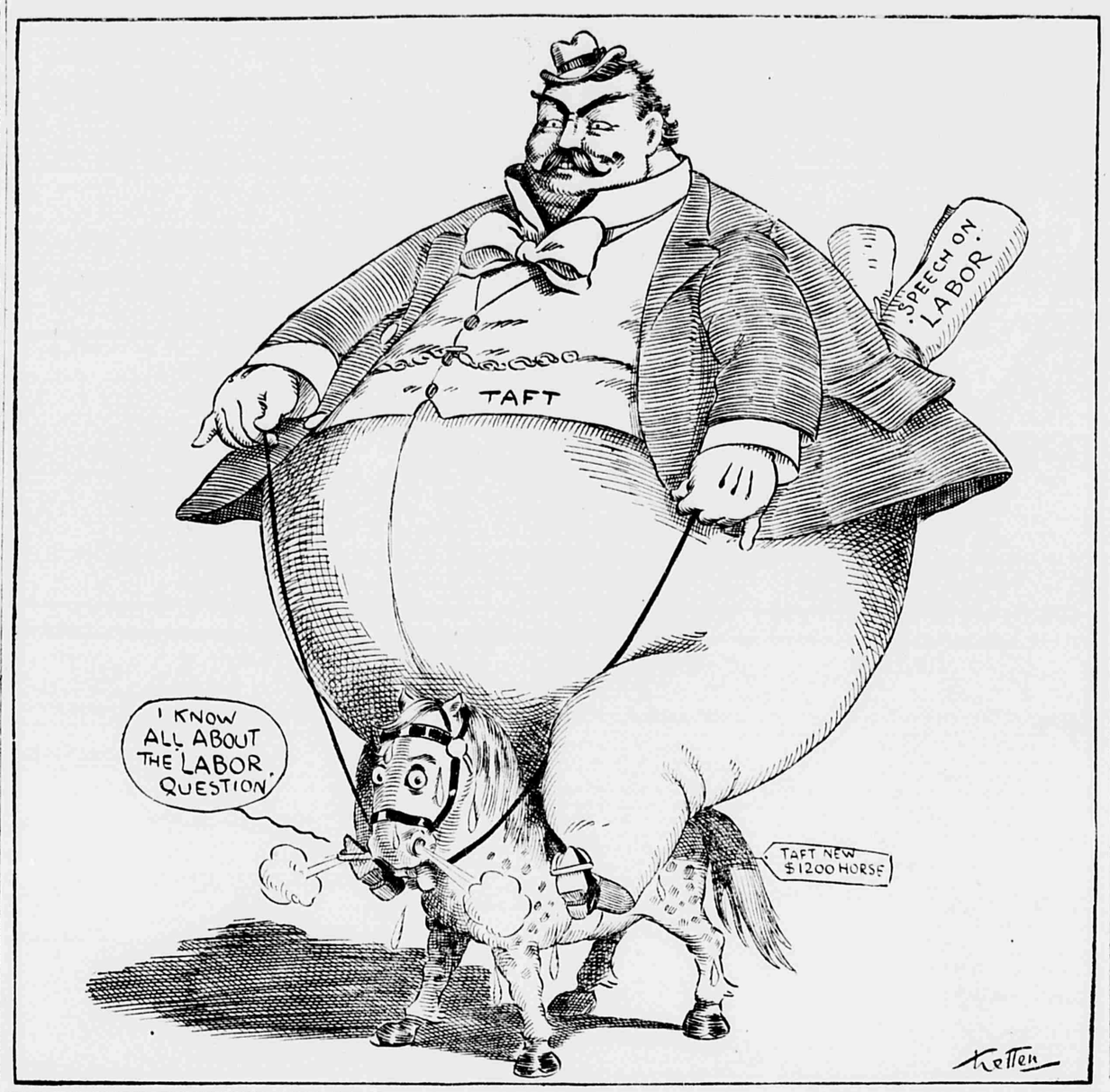
All adjectives have an appropriate use sometime and somewhere, but as for profanity there is no emotion which calls it forth that can not be better expressed in the words and style of great authors.

The simple imprecations of the Bible are more forceful than any swear words. A line can be found in Shakespeare to fit any every day emotion.

Any man who habitually reads these two great books will find his use of profanity diminishing.

Ask the Horse.

By Maurice Ketten.



The Story of the Operas

By Albert Payson Terhune.

NO. 15.—MASSENET'S "THAIS."

THE little colony of monks known as Cenobites ("Living in Common"), on the Nile's banks, at the border of the Egyptian desert, waited anxiously for the return of their holiest brother, Athanael, who was absent on a journey to Alexandria. For during the early centuries of the Christian era it was deemed perilous for a pious recluse to venture into the gay, dissolute Egyptian capital. Late one afternoon Athanael reached the monastery huts, weary, dusty, hungry, but in wild excitement. To his scandalized brethren he related that Thais, a gloriously beautiful actress, had turned all men's brains in Alexandria and was preventing them from giving their thoughts to heaven and to the future life.

That night as he lay sunk in the slumber of exhaustion a vision of Thais came to Athanael, which he construed as a divine command to go again to Alexandria, find the actress and redeem her from a life of worldly gayety. On waking he set forth upon his strange mission. • • •

Nicias, a dissipated young Alexandrian, was preparing a gorgeous feast in Thais's honor when before him appeared a dishevelled, unshorn wild figure whom with difficulty he recognized as Athanael, long-missing friend of his boyhood. The monk told Nicias of his errand in the capital and begged his aid in meeting Thais. Looking on the whole affair as a huge joke, Nicias good-naturedly consented, though warning Athanael in mock earnestness to beware of the actress's wiles. Thais arrived for the feast and Nicias introduced the monk, saying the latter had come all the way from the desert to convert her to his teachings.

"And what does he teach," she queried, eying with wonder the bearded stranger.

"I teach contempt of luxury, love of sorrow, bitter penitence!" answered Athanael.

The idea of such a doctrine struck Thais as ridiculous. She laughed the monk to scorn, but in a gloom of wayward interest let him come to her own palace and speak again of religion. There Athanael preached so eloquently of the folly of earthly joys and the promise of heaven for the righteous that Thais, despite her will, was profoundly moved. Already she was wearying of her idle life. She questioned the monk more closely, and at last, under the almost hypnotic spell of his pleadings, consented to leave Alexandria and the bright pleasures of the world and to let Athanael take her to the convent of the White Nuns in the desert. As a final sacrifice she burned her palace and all its treasures. The populace of Alexandria loath to let the beautiful actress depart, mobbed Athanael, who was only saved from a martyr's death by the intervention of Nicias. • • •

Thais and the monk, after a tedious journey across the burning sands of the Sahara, reached the White Nuns' convent. There, leaving the fair penitent in charge of Lady Albine, the Abbess, Athanael retraced his steps to his own monastery. But to his horror he found he had insensibly undergone a terrible mental change. Instead of a calm, holy recluse, he was as a madman—mad with love for Thais! While he had been winning her to holiness her loveliness had unconsciously been working upon his hitherto unassailed heart. He who had vowed his life to piety and celibacy was as wildly, unreasonably in love with the woman he had converted as though he were a hot-headed boy. • • •

Athanael was aghast at the awful discovery. By fasting, prayer and scourging he sought to rid his mind of this sin. For to so devout a monk as he the idea of marriage was nothing less than wicked. But strive as he would, his love hourly waxed stronger until it became a mania. At length, casting to the winds his vows of single and monastic life, Athanael left the monastery and crossed the desert to the White Nuns' convent in search of Thais, to throw himself at her feet and beg her to return to the world with him. • • •

As he reached the convent the monk heard nuns' voices raised in prayer for the soul of a dying saint. Thais lay at the point of death. Having by her repentance and good works won redemption, she was about to pass into life eternal. Athanael with a cry pushed aside the praying nuns and rushed to the couch where rested the former darling of Alexandria. She recognized him with joy, hailing him in her last breath as her father, her guide to heaven.

Athanael insanely begged her to forget all he had taught her of religion and to remember only that he adored her.

"The angels! The prophets! The saints!" she murmured in ecstasy. "They welcome me!"

"There is no heaven!" cried the maniac. "There is nothing but love! I love you!"

His blasphemous words fell on deaf ears. Thais was dead, and Athanael grovelled raving beside her couch.

The story of "Rheingold" will be published Tuesday.

The Chorus Girl Tells Some Good New Ones on Dopey McKnight

By Roy L. McCardell.


ROY L. McCARDELL

"SAY," said the Chorus Girl, "Dopey McKnight is acting so sensible that we are all getting afraid of him.

"What has he done? What ain't he done? Mamma De Branscombe said if it wasn't that Old Man Moneyton pays his board promptly, and Dopey doesn't eat anything and seldom sleeps, she'd ask him to get another snare.

"You can't tell me its coincidences that do things when queer things happen wrong together at the right time? Oh, yes, coincidences, that Dopey plays them strangely appropriate airs?"

"F'instance, the colored janitor gets in a fuss with his wife and she follers him out on the sidewalk with language and he throws her down a flight of fourteen steps into the basement, but fortunately she lands on her head and escapes uninjured, and Dopey hears it and plays 'Shovellin' In Coal?' allegro, or, as Dopey called it, 'a la negro' tempo.

"Then, right after that, Mamma De Branscombe gets cold in her eyes from falling asleep with them open in Trim-the-Lush Larry's hansom when we was bowling home after a wine party.

"She gets a bottle of 'Eyeine' and one of them eye cups and gives herself a treatment every two hours, and every time she does it Dopey strikes up 'Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes,' and she thinks maybe he means something by it.

"That ain't the worst he done. He comes in the other night when Louie Zinsheimer and Abie Wogglebaum and Old Man Moneyton is up at the snare and starts to leak at the windows and can't speak for a few minutes except to ask if there's any bottled beer left and if anybody's got a cigarette, and interrupts Mamma De Branscombe when she's saying that it's an affront to the fair name of womanhood for ladies to be allowed to smoke in public places.

"'Let 'em have the refinement and poise that comes with modesty at maturity, or let it be only maidenly reserve,' says Mamma De Branscombe, 'but if a lady, a true lady, wants to burn a paper pill let her wait till she gets into the privacy of her own apartments, or maybe in a friend's flat, or, at the very worst, if she simply can't resist the yin she can go into a telephone booth and pay five cents for a local call. And if she'll carry a list of disconnected telephones it'll take a long time and she'll get her fi'pence back. For her motter should be "Once a lady always a lady,"' said Mamma De Branscombe, 'and a lady should never do anything in a public place that would give the proprietor or help an excuse to throw her out!'

"Dopey wouldn't let her finish what she had to say, but started in all excited about a poor widow that had four children and another one expected and whose husband, with whom she'd lived for twenty years, had died suddenly without leaving her a cent, and that she was living on charity and hadn't any clothes, and her name was Mrs. Murphy, and Charles Murphy, the leader of Tammany Hall, said she was no relation of his and let the city take care of her, as it was doing now.

"Old Man Moneyton said 'Bless my heart, does she live near here?' and Dopey said it wasn't far away, and her husband wasn't buried yet and there wasn't even a coffin for him.

"Then Old Man Moneyton come across with twenty bucks and said he'd send a check for more, and Louie Zinsheimer and Abie Wogglebaum kicked in with ten iron men each and said to count on them for a second assessment, and Dopey takes the coin out to The Musical Swede and Boston Charley, who is on the relief committee, and later we finds out we are stung for both our sympathy and the money.

"The Mrs. Murphy Dopey was telling us about was the lady hippopotamus up in Central Park and the dead husband was Caliph, her mate that croaked, but otherwise it was a true story, and Dopey swears he don't know nothin' more than what was told him, and he says, anyway, that a cold charity that questions grabs that greatest of virtues, and, anyway, a hippopotamus isn't so thick-skinned but what it can't be wounded in its tenderest emotions!

"It wasn't no use to pan him, and Mamma De Branscombe told him if he'd get half of the money back and give it to her he could let his friends keep the rest if they wouldn't give it up.

"But Dopey only said that he'd been reading in the papers that the Boxers in China was mobbing them's slonaries and beating them all up; all he could say was it was a big mistake for people in the fighting game to mix it up with church people, and especially preachers, as it always resulted in the boxing fellers gettin' rattled and closed up.

"Say, kid, I'm just wondering if Dopey is a daff or just spoofing.

"Anyway, he sure is the laughdiculous kid!"

The Newlyweds & Their Baby

By George McManus

For Further Adventures of "The Newlyweds, Their Baby," See Sunday World Comic Section

Letters from the People.

Grippe Under Other Names?

To the Editor of The Evening World:

I wish some old timer with a good memory would tell us if what is now known as the grippe was not always prevalent in America. The customary belief is that it came here from Eastern Europe in 1889. But I can remember we used to have the same thing here before then. We called it influenza, fever-and-ague, chills and fever, or any other name, but I believe it was just what now passes for grippe. Who can enlighten me about this?

SUFFERER.

Queer Case of Deafness.

To the Editor of The Evening World:

My case might be considered as wonderful as that of the deaf mutes' band. I am practically totally deaf. Very few sounds of any kind I hear, and a person's voice or a conversation I do not hear at all; but here is where I've got the whole band stopped. I am a telegraph operator, and never had to "lay off" a day on account of my deafness. I work right along with the men that have good hearing and on the same wires, and still I'm totally deaf to spoken conversation. I hear a telegraph instrument the same as any one. You can blindfold me in a room or out in the street, and there isn't anything living that can come up behind me and get nearer than five feet to me without my knowing it. Still, I would not hear a sound behind me, not even the elevated. I don't hear. Where do I belong? Up at the Zoo or in the deaf mute band?

F. B. W.

Subway Stairs.

To the Editor of The Evening World:

I notice a lot of confusion on Bridge station subway stairs when crowds go up them and descend them at the same time in rush hours. This makes us miss trains and is a help to pickpockets. Can't it be stopped? There ought to be enough stairways for all.

M. A. NEWELL JR.

"Crowned with Ugliness."

To the Editor of The Evening World:

Your Northern men are crowned with ugliness. I mean derbies and high hats. They are hideous. Why let such a foolish custom keep on? Future ages will laugh at the ugliest headgears ever invented. The soft, wide-brimmed hat is graceful and becoming. So is the cap, the knockabout hat or the Fedora. So were the hats of our ancestors. Can't some one bring prettier hats into style?

MARYLAND GIRL.

Go After Girls With Money.

By Edmond Rostand.

NEAR Biarritz, in his splendid up-to-date Basque villa, lives the poet Rostand, a recluse. To Rostand came two relatives, a youth and his father, for advice. The young man desired to marry a poor girl for love, writes a special correspondent of the Pittsburg Despatch. The sun was setting in the vale of Cambo. From his high-perched terrace he great soul of Rostand swam out to where the golden light turns rose and back and spoke:

"A serious family question. The boy has not enough for himself. To marry a poor girl he must earn for both; and, preoccupied by work, he will not be able to cultivate the lovely parasite. But when a girl brings money to the partnership, she has an exalting sense of aiding her protector; where springs enduring married love. No, no. France is full of lovable girls with money."

The young relative of Rostand acquiesced—he had been trained for marriage as a profession. Among the French bourgeois youths are prepared for matrimony instead of for work, as carefully as are girls in other lands!

Physically they are not football players. The mass of these smart young fellows still limit themselves to horseback riding and fencing. Horseback riding and fencing, however, obligatory and daily from childhood up, produce a type of young man, healthy, lively and graceful, satisfying to the ideal of the French girl and her mother, by whom she is guided in technical matters.

Too Much for Her Chief.

THERE is a Cabinet officer at Washington who for a long time was greatly annoyed by the incessant requests for promotion preferred by a young woman in his department who was a friend of his family.

One afternoon last winter she entered the great man's office with the usual application. Unfortunately, the head of the department was in anything but a good humor that day. So he flared up instantly.

"Upon my word," exclaimed he, "you clerks are the bane of my life! You"—— he stopped short, as if restraining himself. Then he burst out again with, "I wish to goodness you were a man!"

The young woman flashed a glance at him from a particularly fine pair of eyes, and as a smile came to her handsome face she replied: "Mr. Secretary, you are the first man that ever wished that."

This was too much for the chief. She got her promotion.

"Mountain High" Waves.

WHEN writers speak of waves "mountain high" they are merely indulging in poetic extravagance. A wave exceeding 30 feet in height is seldom encountered. Some have been seen on the Atlantic that reached a height of 44 to 46 feet, but that was entirely exceptional.